DATABASES AND SPREADSHEETS
A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

Things to consider when creating databases and spreadsheets on ensuring their preservation.

CONTROLLED VOCABULARIES
Where possible, use controlled vocabularies and established keyword lists for data entry in both databases and spreadsheets.

BE CONSISTENT
Be consistent and have meaningful names for tables/spreadsheets and rows/columns. Be aware that tables or spreadsheets may not be stored in a single file.

FORMATTING DATA AND CELLS
Avoid using formatting to highlight the meaning of certain values as this may be lost when data are migrated or when using different applications.

CHECK DATA CONSISTENCY AND DOCUMENTATION
Coded or inconsistently entered data pose problems for the reusability. Coded fields and data must be adequately documented, and the documentation must be archived with the database or spreadsheet so that the meaning of the coding is not lost.

DATE
There are different ways of writing the date. The recommendation is to follow the ISO standard, i.e., yyyy-mm-dd for date and hh:mm:ss for time.

AVOID EMBEDDED MATERIAL
Many database and spreadsheet applications allow to embed other types of files in the file (for example images), it is recommended that such content is stored and archived as separate files in the same folder as the database/spreadsheet. This ensures that the quality of the files is not lost.

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